

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
MARCH 22, 2016**

Present: Ms. Laurie Slap, Chair
Dr. Lisa Fiore, Secretary
Mr. Thomas Caputo
Ms. Susan Burgess-Cox
Ms. Elyse Shuster
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business, and Operations

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Ms. Slap called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Slap led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.5 Chair's Report

Ms. Slap congratulated the Chenery Middle School Winds students who had been invited to perform in concert at the Boston Seaport Hotel recently. Ms. Slap stated she had attended and the students performed very well. She also offered congratulations to John McLellan and Sharon Phipps, both middle school music teachers, as well as the entire staff of the music department.

Ms. Slap reminded School Committee members of the Massachusetts Day on the Hill, which takes place on April 26.

Ms. Slap thanked all the community members who offered input and comments on the calendar survey.

1.6 Student Representative Report

There was no student representative in attendance.

1.7 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan recognized the Belmont High School Girls Basketball Team for their great performance on the court this season.

He also thanked the members of the Foundation for Belmont Education for a wonderful evening at the recent gala.

Superintendent Phelan announced the following names selected to the Belmont High School Building Committee.

1. Gerry Boyle – Facilities Director
2. Sami Baghdady – Selectmen Chair
3. David Kale – Town Administrator
4. Thomas Caputo – School Committee member
5. John Phelan – Superintendent
6. Patricia Brusch – Chair of the Permanent Building Committee
7. Daniel Richard – Belmont High School Principal
8. Robert McLaughlin – Community Member
9. Joseph DeStefano – Developer
10. William Lovallo – Engineer
11. Joel Mooney – Engineer
12. Phil Ruggiero – Zoning Board
13. Jamie Shea – Parent
14. Diane Miller – Parent
15. Christopher Messer – Parent

Superintendent Phelan announced this would be Chair Laurie Slap's last School Committee meeting. He thanked her for her dedication and hard work on behalf of the School Committee, Finance Subcommittee, and Warrant Committee.

2. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

3. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

3.1 Vote on School Calendar – Exhibit A

Superintendent Phelan provided an overview of the work done on the 2016-17 school calendar. He gave a presentation of updated results of the recent survey on religious holidays and school start

days. This presentation was created to provide answers to the following questions community members had related to the original survey:

1. Can we disaggregate the data to show what holidays our staff celebrate and take off from school?
2. What is the historical attendance data on religious holidays?
3. Are there logistical issues with opening school on days with potentially low staff attendance rates?
4. What do our surrounding districts do?

Superintendent Phelan also provided historic staff attendance data on holidays that staff members typically take off. He explained the district decided to recognize a Jewish holiday last year for the first time and keep Good Friday as a half day, and offered to create a survey to solicit feedback from families. Superintendent Phelan and the School Committee discussed pros and cons of having religious holidays off, noting that one potential issue with having schools open is the problem of staffing classrooms. The Committee also discussed other districts and how they handle religious holidays. The School Committee also discussed whether to start school before or after Labor Day and closing schools on presidential election days. Superintendent Phelan explained there are potential safety issues with having so many voters driving to the schools on Election Day, as well as having so many people in the schools.

Ms. Slap invited members of the audience to come up to the microphone and offer comments. Several people offered their opinions on each of the topics and asked questions of the School Committee. The School Committee then discussed how to proceed. The members agreed there were valid issues on all sides of the holiday debate and discussed possible ways to recognize the diversity in Belmont and allow people to observe their traditions without impacting the education of students.

Ms. Slap asked Superintendent Phelan for his recommendation. He stated it was his personal opinion to not recognize holidays if it made anyone feel less valued and/or respected than someone else. He also noted he did have concerns about the disruption of learning if too many teachers are out at one time. He also opined that given the later than typical timing of the discussion, the start date for school should not change for 2016-2017.

On a motion offered by Mr. Caputo and seconded by Dr. Fiore, it was

VOTED unanimously to start school on the first Wednesday in September for the 2016-2017 school year and ask the School Committee Policy and Procedure Subcommittee to review the policy.

On a motion offered by Ms. Burgess-Cox and seconded by Dr. Fiore, it was

VOTED 3 – 2 to close all schools on the Presidential Election Day, November 8, 2016.

On a motion offered by Dr. Fiore and seconded by Ms. Burgess-Cox, it was

VOTED unanimously to observe no religious holidays for the 2016-2017 school year.

On a motion offered by Ms. Burgess-Cox and seconded by Ms. Shuster, it was

VOTED unanimously to revisit School Committee Policies 6001, 6011, and 6014 and determine the best method for publicly acknowledging the religious and cultural traditions observed within Belmont community and disseminating that information to faculty, staff and students.

3.2 SEL Update – Exhibit B

Ms. Slap suggested the SEL Update be presented at a future meeting, due to time limitations.

3.3 Suburban Coalition Update – Exhibit C

Ms. Slap provided a brief overview of the Suburban Coalition, explaining they were voting on Chapter 70 Resolution, which calls for full funding of the Foundation Budget Review Commission's Recommendations. She explained the Suburban Coalition is a statewide organization of local officials that advocates for the resources, funding, and support at the state level to help sustain communities in Massachusetts. She then read the following resolution:

Whereas the Massachusetts Foundation Budget Review Commission identified two areas (employee health insurance and special education) where the Massachusetts Foundation Budget significantly understates the true cost of educating students in the Commonwealth and has failed to keep pace with rising costs;

Whereas this underfunding means the cost of providing a quality education has increasingly been borne by local communities, most often at the expense of other vital municipal operations;

Whereas investing in education today leads to higher incomes, and thus less investment in police, prisons, subsidized health care, low income housing, welfare, etc. in the future;

Whereas state and local economies are most effectively strengthened "by investing in education and increasing the number of well-educated workers."

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Belmont School Committee calls on the Massachusetts Legislature and the Governor of Massachusetts to fully fund and adopt the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission in the immediate future.

On a motion offered by Ms. Slap and seconded by Ms. Burgess-Cox, it was

VOTED unanimously to approve the Resolution Calling for Full Funding of the Foundation Budget Review Commission's Recommendations

On a motion offered by Ms. Burgess-Cox and seconded by Mr. Caputo, it was

VOTED unanimously to forward the Chapter 70 Resolution to the Warrant Committee and Board of Selectmen.

4. **SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)**

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee met this week and discussed non-salary line items as well as the need for an additional bus next year.

4.2 Policy and Procedure Subcommittee

There was no report from the Policy and Procedure Subcommittee.

4.3 Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee

The Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee will meet on April 11.

4.4 Capital Budget Committee

The Capital Budget Committee met Thursday to review CPA projects. They will be discussing the Belmont High School Fire Alarm project and other school capital requests at a future meeting.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee will meet on April 6.

4.6 Wellington Building Committee

The Wellington Building Committee is in the process of finalizing payments for their remaining bills.

4.7 Financial Task Force

There was no report from the Financial Task Force.

4.8 Community Path Update

There was no report from the Community Path Committee.

4.9 Library Long Range Planning Committee

There was no report from the Library Long Range Planning Committee.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda - none

5.2 Personnel Items - none

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

- o March 8, 2016

On a motion offered by Ms. Burgess-Cox and seconded by Ms. Shuster, it was

VOTED unanimously to approve the minutes of March 8, 2016.

6. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

Upcoming Meetings:

March 29, 2016

Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 a.m.

April 5, 2016

Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 a.m.

April 11, 2016

Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Meeting
CMS Principal's Office – 9:00 a.m.

April 12, 2016

School Committee Meeting
CMS Large Community Room – 7:00 p.m.

7. **ENCLOSURES**

- o Letter to B.A.R. re: donation
- o Belmont Summer Enrichment Flyer
- o Strategic Plan

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:29 p.m. on a motion offered by Mr. Caputo and seconded by Ms. Shuster, it was

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by


Dr. Lisa Fiore, Secretary